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TAGS: PREL PARM MARR MCAP AF IR RU PK GG FR

SUBJECT: USD/P EDELMAN DISCUSSES AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, IRAN, MISSILE DEFENSE, RUSSIA, NATO, ESDP, AND GEORGIA WITH GOF

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On November 9, USD/P Eric Edelman met with senior GOF officials to discuss Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, missile defense, Russia, NATO and ESDP, and Georgia. There are internal discussions about future French contributions to Afghanistan, but there is no consensus yet on fielding a PRT.

French officials worry about shoring up European public opinion on ISAF and don't want French deployments to be used to replace other European allies. GOF officials expressed concerns about the unstable situation in Pakistan and worried about a weakened Musharraf. France recognizes the legitimacy of U.S. missile defense interests, but is not ready to recognize missile defense as a NATO project. On Russia, the French expressed unhappiness with recent developments on INF, but acknowledged Russian intransigence on a wide range of issues. European reservations on MAP for Georgia have grown following recent developments in Georgia. Finally, the GOF would appreciate a positive statement from the USG on strengthening European defense capabilities.

¶2. (SBU) USD/P Edelman's interlocutors included Deputy Military Adviser Col. Antoine Noguier and Advisor for the Americas Damien Loras of the French Presidency (Elysee); Director of Strategic Affairs Philippe Carre at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Director of Strategic Affairs at the Ministry of Defense, Michel Miraillet. USD/P Edelman also met with Defense Minister Herve Morin (reported septel). END SUMMARY.

¶3. (C) AFGHANISTAN: USD/P Edelman reported on his recent trip to Afghanistan, where he saw enormous progress in the counterinsurgency effort in RC-East, including in economic and development assistance. The next big challenge is to advance a similarly successful counterinsurgency effort in the South and West of the country. He noted that the Afghan people want the international community to stay; we need to focus on strengthening the GOA by helping them provide better services to the population. Edelman thanked his GOF interlocutors for the promised fifth French Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) to help the Dutch in Uruzgan, as well as for President Sarkozy's recent positive statements on fulfilling NATO's mission in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, Edelman added, this message of common threats and values justifying our presence in Afghanistan is not pervasive enough in Europe.

FUTURE DEPLOYMENTS TO AFGHANISTAN

¶4. (C) Elysee Deputy Military Advisor Noguier repeated President Sarkozy's recent statement to the U.S. Congress that the French will stay in Afghanistan as long as needed, although the GOF still believes that an exit strategy is important. Americas Advisor Loras noted that the deployment of French special forces was one future possibility, but that the key short-term goal for the French was to shore up consensus for a revisited Afghanistan strategy among European partners. USD/P Edelman suggested France consider a PRT in the Nimruz province, where Iranian infiltrators are currently entering Afghanistan. Noguier acknowledged President Sarkozy's interest in a possible PRT, but said that France must be very careful what messages it sends to its European partners, as they don't want to encourage merely replacing departing European forces with French forces. At the MFA, Carre noted that the Sarkozy administration is reviewing President Chirac's prior decision to stay in Kabul. The emerging French priority is to develop a long-term political and military vision with 3-4 year goals and a "success strategy" focused on helping the Afghans do more for themselves. Carre noted that a PRT is not an "easy sell" and said that he favors the Quad format for discussions on troop contributions. France supports counternarcotics efforts as long as they do not take over the law and order responsibilities of the GOA. At the MOD, Miraillet emphasized that the GOF priority is to increase support with other Europeans (most of whom "look at their boots" when the question of Afghanistan is raised). On the specific issue of deploying a PRT, he said, "it depends on what the President decides." Other open questions include force generation and finding the right partners such as NGOs. (NOTE: The proposed visit of an interagency team to discuss PRTs could help answer some of these questions. End note.)

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SHORING UP EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION

¶5. (C) All of the French officials in the meetings agreed on the need for a public statement on NATO's strategy as part of the March 2008 Bucharest summit. USD/P pointed out that Secretary Gates had discussed with DefMins at Noorwijk the

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need for an alliance strategy to carry ISAF forward for the next 3-5 years. All of USD/P Edelman's interlocutors emphasized the need to shore up European public commitment for NATO action in Afghanistan. Carre said that initially, Europeans understood the international community's engagement in Afghanistan to be legitimate, but they mistakenly assumed that it would be easy. The GOF also underestimated the difficulty and duration of the mission, but it recognized those factors sooner than its European allies. Unfortunately, other countries, not used to fighting, have "panicked" and must now develop a new argument for a long, messy and complicated engagement in Afghanistan. Carre emphasized that the GOA must eventually be self-sufficient, and asked about our vision for long-term reconciliation in Afghanistan. At the Elysee, Loras inquired about progress in finding a new head for UNAMA. Miraillet also showed interest in USG thoughts on candidates for the UNAMA job, noting that he and Gerard Araud (MFA Political Director) had "spent a night trying to come up with appropriate names and had not been successful." Edelman agreed that finding the right candidate was proving difficult.

¶6. (C) PAKISTAN: USD/P Edelman discussed Pakistan in the context of his recent trip to Afghanistan, with a canceled stop in Pakistan, saying that President Karzai is hoping Musharraf can survive. Loras noted that Musharraf is still the "best shield against enemies," but wondered what will happen if he does not successfully reform and ensure his political survival. There was consensus among French interlocutors that even in the best possible outcome,

Musharraf will have lost status, while his actions against Bhutto enhance her credibility. Edelman noted that we need to help train and equip Pakistani forces to perform more effective counterterrorism operations, which would also increase their morale. Miraillet observed that the deterioration of the Pakistani situation is not a good omen for Afghanistan. The parties agreed that under Gen. Kidwai, the Strategic Plans Division had a good grip on Pakistani nuclear capabilities; however, Miraillet said he understood that Kidwai had resigned two weeks ago and his deputy is ineffective. (NOTE: We believe MOD to be misinformed on this point).

¶7. (C) IRAN: USD/P Edelman noted that the exchange of intelligence with Russia regarding the Iranian missile threat was the most detailed intelligence exchange with the GOR since the end of the World War. The U.S. provided a quick overview of the evolution of Iranian missile capabilities. The U.S. had not received a formal response to our proposals in Moscow on MD. Carre noted that some European partners such as Norway say proliferation occurs because of insufficient disarmament progress, and also that France finds the UK's rhetoric "dangerous." He said that work in the P3 was helpful and that better public diplomacy was needed.

¶8. (C) MISSILE DEFENSE: At the Elysee, USD/P Edelman noted that Morin had two questions at his meeting with Defense Secretary Gates in Noordwijk: the missile defense threat and

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the technical parameters of the proposed system. He said that Gen. Obering will be in Paris later this month (expected November 28-30) to discuss how our governments might work together more closely on missile defense, such as through the creation of a NATO test bed and French industrial participation in the development of missile defense capabilities. Edelman cited progress in the ongoing discussions with the Czech Republic and Poland. Carre stated his belief that MD issues with Russia will be worked out. While France agrees that considering how to deal with rising missile threats is legitimate, the GOF is not ready to recognize the proposed U.S. system as an Alliance project. French officials know that the U.S. will be looking to NATO to bless a missile defense system at Bucharest, but the U.S. is moving too fast for NATO. Miraillet observed that the picture for French defense expenditures is "dark, dark, dark," saying that if President Sarkozy has to choose between allocating 2-3 billion euros for either an aircraft carrier

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or missile defense, he will probably choose the aircraft carrier.

¶9. (C) RUSSIA: Carre said that France was unhappy with how recent developments regarding the INF treaty were handled, believing that Russia now has another "out." Edelman confirmed that the U.S. never saw France (or the UK) as part of INF and said that the GOR had wished to get out of INF for years due, at least publicly, to proliferation threats on its southern border. Carre volunteered an explanation for Kislyak's reluctance to schedule the next round of experts discussions, saying that missile defense is "one piece of a larger puzzle" of Russia's relations with the West. He said either Putin legitimately fears encirclement and incremental loss of sovereignty, or is using that dynamic for domestic political gain. The U.S. wants to show our willingness to work with the Russians, while the Russian interest lies in showing that cooperation with the West is bad across the board. The CFE treaty is an innocent bystander in a bigger quarrel about issues like Kosovo. Miraillet noted that it was "very Russian" to postpone confronting the situation because of uncertainty over the best course of action. He echoed Carre's professed unhappiness with the U.S.-Russian joint statement on INF. Miraillet said the French were not looking for apologies, just an analysis of the consequences.

¶10. (C) NATO and ESDP: At the Elysee, USD/P Edelman noted that another question discussed in the recent Gates-Morin meeting was ESDP and its implications for NATO. Loras said the GOF would appreciate some high-level words of support from the U.S. on increased European defense capabilities. At the MOD, Miraillet downplayed the effect of increased European defense capabilities on NATO. He noted that the EU military staff is currently 90 officers, while 150 would constitute a planning capacity. So, creation of an "autonomous planning capacity" is really just the addition of 60 officers. He claimed that Berlin Plus would still be requested for any large operation as the EU has no desire to create a Euro-SHAPE. He described the agenda as pragmatic and operational, citing Chad as an example of a situation where SHAPE was not the best context for operational civil-military planning. USD/P said this subject could require further discussion.

¶11. (C) NEXT STEPS ON GEORGIA: Loras suggested there might be parallels between the situation with Musharraf in Pakistan and Saakashvili in Georgia, where a "good guy" does "bad things" and the international community has to react. Loras noted that European reservations on Georgia MAP have grown. USD/P Edelman stressed that we have time to consider this issue. The parties agreed the question would be decided at some point before the Bucharest Summit.

¶12. (U) USD/P Edelman has cleared this message.

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